DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 384 SP 031 810

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TITLE How Many and Why Not More: A Survey of Issues in Education.
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, October 19-20, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; College Faculty; Elementary Secondary Education; *Excellence in Education; Higher Education; Professional Recognition; Socioeconomic Status; *Student Characteristics; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

This study explored differences among elementary and secondary teachers, elementary and secondary principals, and faculty members and undergraduate education students concerning three main issues in education: (1) effective teaching; (2) educational reform and professionalism; and (3) the nature of school children. Principals were found to be more optimistic concerning the implementation of effective teaching practices, and felt that teacher inability was the major impediment. Teachers felt that lack of time and the characteristics of their students created the greatest impediment to effectiveness. All of the groups felt that the best way to learn effective teaching practices was through actual teaching. The majority of teachers were not familiar with the reform reports from the Holmes Group or the Carnegie Foundation. The undergraduate education students did not anticipate teaching low SES or low achieving children. However, teachers from the same geographic areas reported that over 50 percent of their students were low or lower middle SES and below average in achievement. The results raise questions concerning teacher efficacy, the nature of the profession, and the recruitment and training of teacher education students. (Author)

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ED314384

How Many and Why Not More:
A Survey of Issues in Education

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October, 1989

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Running head: HOW MANY

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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Abstract

This study explored differences among elementary and secondary teachers, elementary and secondary principals, and college education faculty members and undergraduate education students related to three main issues in education: (1) effective teaching, (2) educational reform and professionalism, and (3) the nature of school children. Principals were found to be more optimistic concerning the implementation of effective teaching practices, and felt that teacher inability was the major impediment. Teachers felt that lack of time and the characteristics of their students created the greatest impediment to effectiveness. All of the groups felt that the best way to learn effective teaching practices was through actual teaching. The majority of teachers were not familiar with the reform reports from the Holmes Group or the Carnegie Foundation. The undergraduate education students did not anticipate teaching low SES or low achieving children. However, teachers from the same geographic areas reported that over 50 percent of their students were low or lower middle SES and below average in achievement. The results raise questions concerning teacher efficacy, the nature of the profession, and the recruitment and training of teacher education students.

How Many and Why Not More:
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The objective of this study was to identify differing responses to questions concerning educational practices among teachers, principals, college education faculty members, and undergraduate education students. Group comparisons were made to determine differences in perceptions regarding effective teaching behaviors, reform efforts, and the socio-economic status and achievement of school children. These perceptions provide insights into teacher self-efficacy, professionalism in education, and preparation for teaching today's children.

The effective schools and effective teaching movements have been with us for some time now. Efforts to improve student learning and achievement on a building and classroom level have been the subject of numerous programs and articles. The perceptions of educators concerning the ability of teachers to implement effective teaching behaviors and the impediments to that implementation would suggest degrees of efficacy attributed to teachers.

A comparison of perceptions of school effectiveness found that principals, especially elementary principals, were more optimistic about the effectiveness of their schools than were their teachers (Jandes, Murphy, & Sloan, 1985). Richardson

(1985) found that principals perceived their teachers as more competent managers of student behavior than teachers perceived themselves. Elementary principals saw their teachers as more competent than secondary principals, and elementary teachers saw themselves as more competent than secondary teachers. In the same study, teachers indicated that the first year of teaching experience was the best source of teaching competency. This was followed by other years of experience which was followed by student teaching experience.

Although there was some agreement among teachers, principals, and student teacher supervisors as to the most and least important teaching skills, many teaching skills were not viewed with equal importance among the groups (Beal, 1987). In another study principals identified "outside" factors as the greatest obstacle to improved learning in schools (Center for Education Statistics, 1988).

If teachers are to control the destiny of their profession, they need to be aware of developments related to professional preparation, school management, and teacher empowerment. Although two major reform reports were released during 1986 (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Holmes Group Executive Board), little comparative research concerning the views of educators regarding the recommendations made by the reports has been done. Awareness of the reports and support for their recommendations could suggest a level of professional interest among teachers compared to principals and college

education faculty.

There is a growing interest in the education of urban children. This is evidenced by universities, such as the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, making urban education a major theme throughout their teacher education programs. The perceptions of educators concerning the nature of school children can affect expectations, teacher behaviors, and even the functioning of whole schools. Student socio-economic status and achievement play a role in teacher expectations (Scott & Teddlie, 1987) and affect teacher practices (Moore & Cooper, 1984). What is more important is that effective low and middle SES schools tend to function differently (Teddlie, Stringfield, Wimpelberg, & Kirby, 1987). Compared to effective middle SES schools, effective low SES schools tend to emphasize present expectations, concentrate more on basic skills, and offer more external rewards. Effective low SES schools hire initiator rather than manager type principals and hire younger more idealistic teachers. They also attempt to buffer the schools from negative community influences. If differing practices are successful in schools based on the SES of their students, then teachers should be prepared to deal with these differences. The type of children education students are prepared to teach should influence their success as teachers.

Methods

Subjects

Data were collected from elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers, elementary principals, secondary principals, undergraduate education students, and college education faculty members from areas of Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. After permission was granted from district superintendents, principals were contacted to determine if and how questionnaires could be distributed to their teachers. Questionnaires were distributed by principals to the teachers in faculty meetings or in the teachers' school mailboxes. The teachers returned the questionnaires to the principal who then returned them by mail. The return rate for 1410 teachers' questionnaires was approximately 57 percent. The sample was matched with the state statistics for gender, grade level (elementary and secondary), and state distributions (National Education Association, 1987). Of the 813 questionnaires returned, incomplete questionnaires and matching procedures reduced the sample to 300.

Principals from the teachers' schools and other area schools were included in the sample. The principal sample was matched for elementary and secondary levels based on the state statistics from Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin (National Education Association, 1987). Of the 240 questionnaires distributed to principals, 127 (53 percent) were returned. Of these, 100 were

included in the sample.

The college samples were drawn from institutions from the same geographical areas as the teacher and principal samples. College education faculty questionnaires were received from six institutions; student questionnaires were received from four institutions. The undergraduate student sample was taken from undergraduate education methods courses. Of the 350 questionnaires distributed to college education faculties and undergraduate education students, 131 (37 percent) were returned. The college education faculty sample and the undergraduate sample each contained 50 members.

Instrument

After completing a questionnaire indicating agreement with research-based effective teaching behaviors (Marchant & Bowers, in press), school teachers, principals, college education faculty members, and undergraduate education students were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. How many effective teaching behaviors could be implemented in the classroom?
2. What keeps more effective teaching behaviors from being implemented?
3. What is the best way to learn effective teaching behaviors?
4. Which professional educational journals do you read regularly?

5. Do you agree with recommendations made by the Carnegie and Holmes reform reports?
6. How would you describe the SES of the students in your classroom(s)?
7. How would you describe the achievement level of the students in your classroom(s)?

For questions 6 and 7, college education faculty members were asked to indicate the type of school children they were preparing their preservice teachers to teach, and the undergraduate education students were asked to indicate the type of school children they believed they would be teaching.

Results

Chi-square tests of independence indicated that there was a relationship ($p < .001$) between group membership and response choice for each question (see Table 1 for percentages). Elementary and secondary principals were the most optimistic concerning the number of effective teaching behaviors that could be implemented. They were followed by elementary teachers, secondary teachers, college education faculty members, and finally undergraduate education students. The groups viewed the major impediments to the implementation of effective teaching behaviors differently. Teachers indicated that time and student characteristics kept more effective teaching from taking place, whereas the other groups placed more responsibility with the

classroom teacher. Actual classroom teaching was the best way to learn effective teaching behaviors according to all of the groups. The college education faculty members and students were more optimistic concerning student teaching experiences.

Insert Table 1

about here

The reading of professional education journals on a regular basis was likely to be a major source of information regarding educational reform. College education faculty members read an average of 4.6 journals and 92 percent of them were familiar with the reports from the Holmes Group and the Carnegie Forum. Elementary principals read an average of 3.2 journals, and secondary principals read an average of 2.8 journals. Fifty-two percent of the elementary school principals were familiar with the reports, and 66 percent of the secondary principals were familiar with the reports. Elementary and secondary teachers read about 2.3 journals, and 20 percent of the elementary teachers and 25 percent of the secondary teachers were familiar with the reports. The majority of those that were familiar with the reports agreed with their recommendations.

The principal groups viewed their school's children as being higher achieving than did the other groups. The undergraduate education students anticipated teaching children from higher

social economic backgrounds than was indicated by the other groups. Almost 60 percent of the students thought that most of their students would be from upper middle SES or above. None indicated that they thought they would be teaching children from low SES environments. This is in contrast to 25 percent of the elementary teachers that indicated that the majority of their students were from low SES backgrounds.

Discussion

The responses to the questions regarding the number of effective teaching behaviors that could be implemented supported other research indicating the optimism of school principals. The order of optimism among the groups followed an order similar to the order of the groups' support for research-based effective teaching behaviors (Marchant, 1988). Such that, those that were more supportive of the behaviors identified by research as effective were more optimistic about the ability to implement the behaviors in the classroom.

Issues concerning the teachers' sense of self-efficacy can be related to their accepting less responsibility for the lack of more effective teaching. The teachers identified the characteristics of the students as a major factor, whereas the other groups placed more responsibility on the teachers' abilities. Over one third of the education students identified the ability of teachers as the major impediment to effective

teaching. Less than ten percent of the teachers indicated that teacher ability was the major problem. It was not clear whether the difference was due to experience or historical factors.

The percentage of teachers unfamiliar with the Carnegie and Holmes reports was rather disturbing. Over 75 percent of the teachers were not familiar with the two most significant educational reform reports of the decade. This would seem to lead to concern over the professional interest that teachers have in their occupation as well as concern for the teacher associations that should be keeping their members informed. Less than half of the teachers indicated that they read any professional education journals, this is disconcerting and may be related to the teachers' lack of awareness of the reform reports.

The expectations of education students concerning the SES of their future students was a cause for concern. None of the undergraduate education students from the six institutions sampled anticipated teaching primarily lower SES children. Considering that the majority of the education students were majoring in elementary education, and that 25 percent of the elementary teachers from the same regions described their students as coming from low SES backgrounds, questions arise concerning teacher preparation and recruitment. Shakiba & Yellin (1981) concluded that teacher training colleges relate little specific skill knowledge related to low SES students. Although the college education faculty members' responses indicated a more realistic view of the SES of school children that the education

students would eventually be teaching, this view apparently is not being conveyed strongly enough to the education students.

Conclusion

Although this study involved a relatively small sample from a limited geographic region, important concerns were identified. Teachers need to accept (and be given) more responsibility for the implementation of effective teaching behaviors. Teachers should also become more involved in their profession through reading professional publications and by staying aware of developments in the field. Teacher preparation programs should emphasize teaching experiences as a means of learning effective teaching, and should prepare their education students for teaching children from lower SES backgrounds.

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Table 1.

Percent of group choosing response for each item.

Item Response	Elemen. Teachers	Second. Teachers	Elementary Principals	Secondary Principals	Educ. Students	Educ. Faculty
Number of Behaviors						
Almost all	83	75	93	90	66	70
More than half	16	22	7	10	30	26
Less than half	1	2	0	0	4	4
Almost none	0	1	0	0	0	0
Impediments						
Administration	1	1	0	0	4	2
Time	35	32	16	18	48	17
Curriculum	3	3	0	3	6	2
Students	26	37	4	5	4	4
Teachers	9	9	49	45	35	42
Other	26	18	31	30	3	33
Learn Behaviors						
Undergraduate courses	1	0	0	0	4	4
Student teaching	3	8	2	0	29	17
Grad. courses	7	6	2	10	0	4
Teaching	76	80	76	68	61	46
Other	13	6	20	22	6	28
Professional Journals Read						
None	39	47	7	7	82	10
Some	61	53	93	93	18	90
Reform Reports						
Agree	17	19	43	37	4	47
Disagree	4	6	9	29	0	45
Not familiar	80	75	48	34	96	8
Student Social Economic Status						
High	5	1	10	5	2	0
Upper mid.	30	30	37	33	56	37
Lower mid.	40	63	37	57	42	58
Low	25	6	16	5	0	5
Student Achievement compared to average						
Definitely above	5	7	42	17	6	12
Slightly above	30	42	44	60	67	65
Slightly below	40	36	14	23	23	21
Definitely below	25	15	0	0	4	2